



## Testimony of Anna Korsen, Full Plates Full Potential

### Neither for nor against LD 2212 An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, I'm Anna Korsen, Deputy Director with [Full Plates Full Potential](#), a statewide non-profit working to address childhood food insecurity in Maine by maximizing access to federally funded USDA nutrition programs like SNAP and school meals. Full Plates is a founding member of Hunger Free Maine, a coalition formed to advocate for policies identified in Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger. I also serve as the co-chair of the Ending Hunger in Maine Advisory Committee.

**Today I am testifying neither for nor against LD 2212 An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027.**

This past November we asked Maine people to share with us the impact that the federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will have, and this is what we heard:

*Kelly, who runs a pantry in Dover-Foxcroft, said: "We are receiving calls from homebound older adults who are unable to reach food pantries and are in need of food if they do not receive SNAP. One grandmother was in tears, she is raising her grandson and not sure how she will have food in November and how she will feed her grandson."*

*Theresa from Waterville shared: "My family depends on the snap benefits every month to just get part of the month with food, food pantries only are able to provide for a couple weeks and that's if they have enough to provide for 2 weeks. We don't own a vehicle so we aren't able to go to more than one food bank and then the SNAP benefits are our only source of food. We live from month to month."*

**The facts are clear that SNAP matters to Maine because too many Mainers can't afford their basic needs.** We witnessed the fear and chaos created in Maine households and communities last November at the prospect of lost SNAP benefits and we saw that Maine's state budget had no straightforward mechanism to replace the \$29 million in federal benefits that feed Mainers every

month. We also saw the generosity of individuals and the valiant efforts of our emergency food system, but the strain on food pantries was impossible to ignore. **Charity can't replace SNAP** or other programs that help people afford their basic needs.

The historic cuts of HR.1 mean that Maine, like other states, is now facing a similar crisis. We are about to lose \$6M to administer SNAP and we are at risk of losing up to \$50M *each year* to fund SNAP benefits for low-income Mainers. In light of the sustained threats to the SNAP program and chaotic communication from USDA to Maine DHHS, we welcome Section F-1 of this budget.

In a time when food insecurity is on the rise<sup>1</sup>, living costs are unaffordable, and the economy is volatile, **Mainers need to be able to count on programs like SNAP and rural economies rely on it as an economic stabilizer**. This proposed budget includes an increase to the amount of funding the Governor can distribute in an emergency from \$400,000 to \$4 million. We support this initiative, and shoring up the charitable food network is critical in times of increased food insecurity. However, food pantries should be the last line of defense and cannot fill the gap left behind when SNAP is taken away and this is just one piece of a larger solution. We recommend expanding this emergency funding to also be available to programs like Maine Harvest Bucks, TEFAP, Mainers Feeding Mainers, the Commodity Food Program, and others to ensure the funds reach diverse geographic regions of the state and as many households as possible.

While food pantries do their best to serve their communities, they are often volunteer run and open just a few days or hours a week, making them difficult for many people to access. Being that SNAP benefits are the most efficient and equitable method for providing food assistance, we are also recommending to the joint standing committee on Health and Human Services that funding for a month or more of SNAP benefits (about \$30M - \$87M) should be made available to the Governor in the case of an emergency, as seen in November. Ensuring emergency funding for SNAP benefits is available would also address the negative economic ripple effects of the loss of SNAP that impact small businesses like grocery stores and farms. Each \$1 in SNAP spending generates \$1.54 in local economic activity<sup>2</sup> To be clear, this would not be a new budget allocation, but instead a policy change that will give the state the power to act in the face of federal cuts.

Our state constitution protects the right to food for all of us and Maine has committed to ending hunger by 2030. The Legislature must be prepared to meet the basic needs of Mainers who bear the greatest burden of food insecurity and instability in the delivery of federal benefits and policy. Thank you for your time and commitment to food security for all Maine people. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/maine>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs>



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